

Fragment of the Month: May 2007

St Augustine in the Genizah

by Ben Outhwaite

A fragment of vellum containing a Latin text of a sermon by Saint Augustine — an unquestionably Christian text — is probably one of the last things you'd expect to find in the Cairo Genizah. Christian texts do find their way into the Collection, however, often as the undertext of palimpsests, as here, where a piece of vellum containing Book 2 Chapter 24 of St. Augustine's *De Sermone Domini in Monte* (the Sermon on the Mount) has been reused by a Jewish scribe to write masoretic lists. The manuscript was barely scraped, or perhaps only washed, before being reused, and the Latin text, which is in a hand probably dating from the sixth century CE, is still clearly legible where it is exposed in the clear space between the columns of Hebrew text.

The masoretic lists are in an early hand too, probably of the 9–10th century, and preserve notes to 1 Samuel 9, including a list of the occurrences of the plene spelling of 'Benjamin'. As would be expected, there are a number of differences between the lists and the standard critical edition of the Masoretic Text in use today (which is based on Codex Leningrad B19a).

This fragment belongs with Add.4320, from the Library's oriental manuscript collection, which consists of four leaves from the same palimpsest. These were acquired separately by the Library, and were not part of Schechter's great hoard.



T-S AS 139.1 Recto:

the Latin text visible between the columns reads:

[ovium] ve[st]e[s] cum autem malo in err[ore]

[a]liud quam lu[p]os c[o]ntegu[nt]

'...the clothing of sheep; when they are deceitfully done through an evil intention, they are only a covering for wolves.'



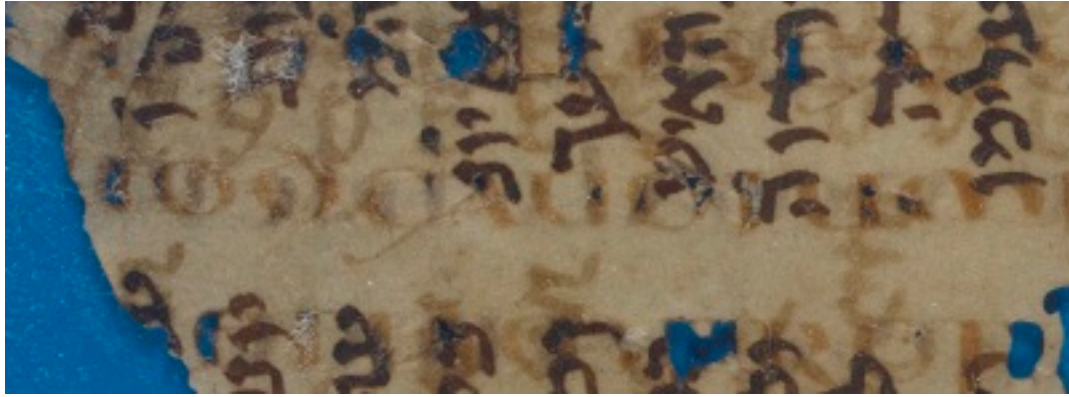
T-S AS 139.1 Verso:

quod [?] gaudium non dic[itu]r n[i]s[i in bonis]

et[iam] prop[h]eta loquitur [...]

‘rejoicing is not attributed to any but the good. It is in this proper sense that the Prophet also used the word when he says...’

English translation taken from Denis J. Kavanaugh (transl.), ‘Saint Augustine: Commentary on the Lord’s Sermon on the Mount with seventeen related sermons’ (Washington D.C., 1951)



A note on the text of verso:

The standard edition of Augustine’s Sermons reads ‘qua gaudium’, but this fragment appears to have ‘[q]uod gaudium’, or perhaps an abbreviation for ‘quod’. I stand prepared to be corrected.

If you enjoyed this Fragment of the Month, you can find others [here](#).

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